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# Hill leaders fail to alert U.S. to Soviet threat, Perle says

By Walter Andrews  
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Congressional leaders, not the press, are to blame for the failure to alert the American people sufficiently to the threat posed by the growing Soviet military buildup, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle says.

"It is appalling how few of the members of Congress, who vote on these issues dozens of times a year, have taken the time to inform themselves — even to come to briefings," the defense official said.

For example, he said not one of the "23 or 24 members" who traveled to Geneva to observe the nuclear arms negotiations in March had bothered to attend a Pentagon briefing arranged for them.

In comments Tuesday night to the National Strategy Information Center, a private group, Mr. Perle also warned of the expanding pattern of Soviet violations of arms control agreements. He believes the situation will only worsen.

The new giant phased-array radar system under construction at Krasnoyarsk, when combined with existing radars, would give the Soviets the radar coverage needed for a nationwide missile defense system, which would violate the 1972 ABM treaty, he said.

The United States has been at a loss for a way to respond effectively to the violations, 19 of which have been documented in White House reports to Congress.

Mr. Perle proposed that Congress approve a contingency fund of \$10 billion to \$12 billion, over and above the normal defense appropriation. It would be spent only on weapons if the Soviet violations continue.

After the seminar, he said this was only his idea, and had not been officially broached in the Pentagon.

During the seminar's formal question-and-answer session, the official was asked why the news media had not done more to report on the Soviet arms buildup and nuclear arms violations.

"I don't fault the news media in the main. I think the fault, if there is one, lies with the . . . political leadership in this country," replied the official, who is well known as the Pentagon's hard-line intellectual.

"Because if the political leadership were itself informed, and I have the Congress very much in mind . . . then I think we would see

the story told far more effectively in the words of many individuals of all political persuasions. That, unhappily is not the case," he said.

"Of the 23 or 24 members of Congress who intended at that point to travel to Geneva, not a single one was available to be briefed. They had time to travel, they had time to observe, but they didn't have time to sit down, and be briefed on the forces that were going to be under discussion," he said.

"While there are in the House and Senate individuals here and there who have taken the time and trouble to inform themselves, it's all too rare," said the one-time Senate aide to former Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson.

"I think the response of the media, if there were a more knowledgeable consensus among the political leadership at all levels of government, would be a positive one," Mr. Perle said.

Informing the public about the Soviet threat is also hampered by "the sometimes overemphasized need" of the U.S. intelligence community to protect its secret sources and methods of obtaining information, he said.

For example, pictures of Soviet installations are normally not publicized because they might disclose the capability of satellite cameras, he said.

The construction of the Krasnoyarsk radar and the implications it would have for a radar network indicates "that we may face the possession by the Soviet Union unilaterally" of a nationwide ballistic missile defense system, Mr. Perle said.

Such a system would upset the worldwide nuclear balance, which depends on each side having an equal ability to retaliate to deter any initial nuclear attack.

"It is precisely that radar network that is now virtually in place, with the single exception of the radar now under construction. So that radar is far more important than any single radar," the assistant secretary said.

An electronic-scanning, phased-array radar system takes five or six years to develop. And its construction is easily observed by surveillance satellites, he said, so that fair warning could be given that the Soviet were "breaking out" of the ABM treaty.

But Mr. Perle warned that "all the other elements of a ballistic missile defense" can be secretly developed, manufactured and rapidly deployed.